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Governor Baker, MBTA Celebrate Expansion of The RIDE's On-Demand Paratransit Service

As pilot celebrates 10,000 rides, MBTA extends participation to all RIDE users effective March 1st

BOSTON – Today, Governor Charlie Baker and MBTA Acting General Manager Brian Shortsleeve celebrated 10,000 rides in the MBTA's The RIDE On-Demand Paratransit Pilot Program with ride-share companies Uber and Lyft, and announced that effective March 1st, the program will be open to all eligible users of The RIDE. [Launched in](#) September 2016, the first-of-its-kind innovative pilot has expanded options for 400 customers with disabilities, providing improved flexibility and mobility while reducing fares and overall program costs.

"The success of this partnership with ride-share companies is changing lives and improving reliability for the MBTA's paratransit customers who rely on The RIDE for their daily travels," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "We are proud the MBTA is expanding this program to all users of The RIDE, and providing individuals with disabilities greater flexibility and convenience that many of us may take for granted."

Governor Baker [highlighted the program's ingenuity](#) in his 2017 State of the Commonwealth Address last month, sharing the story of a pilot user and the benefits and flexibility the program has offered to customers. The on-demand pilot operates in conjunction with traditional RIDE service, offering reduced fares, lower wait times,

faster trips without the need to share rides, and same-day booking (compared to The RIDE's day prior notice) for RIDE service areas and hours of operation. The program includes options for wheel-chair accessible vehicles and includes access for MBTA paratransit customers without smartphones.

"The partnership with these two ride-share companies has been a game-changer for our paratransit customers," **said Secretary of Transportation Stephanie Pollack.**

"They have been able to take advantage of transit options which allow them to be spontaneous and travel directly to their destinations. We believe the success of this partnership with Lyft and Uber will serve as a springboard for more performance-driven improvements."

"This is a win-win solution for our Riders and the MBTA," **said Acting General Manager Brian Shortsleeve.** "It's an example of a way we can partner with best-in-class private companies to drive innovation at the MBTA."

Governor Baker and Acting General Manager Shortsleeve celebrated the announcement at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, where pilot user Joshua Boissoneau is an employee. A para-rower, Paralympic hopeful and RIDE user since 2015, Boissoneau joined the pilot in October 2016 and uses the on-demand service an average of six or more times a week to travel to his office, medical appointments and rowing practices along the Charles River from Brighton.

"Since my first day in the pilot program, I have shared with fellow rowers and friends how impressed I was with the benefits of the program, including reliability, user-friendliness, comfort, convenience and timing," **said Joshua Boissoneau.** "The on-demand service has alleviated stress in getting to my medical appointments, work and practice in a timely way. I look forward to remaining an active participant."

On-demand trips cost customers \$2.00, with the MBTA subsidizing the next \$13.00 and additional costs being assumed by the customer. The model resulted in an MBTA trip subsidy difference of 71% between traditional RIDE and on-demand trip costs (\$9 for on-demand versus \$31 using traditional RIDE). The average cost to the customer was found to be \$4.38 for a same-day trip (versus \$5.25 using traditional RIDE) with customers saving an average of 34 minutes with every pilot trip taken.

From October 2016 to February 2017, traditional RIDE trips reduced by 18% while total trips taken by the MBTA's paratransit users (traditional RIDE and on-demand pilot combined) increased by 28%. The overall cost to the MBTA (traditional RIDE versus a combination of on-demand service and traditional RIDE) decreased by 6%. Expanding the pilot is anticipated to increase savings to the MBTA and allow full-scale testing of key pilot elements.

Customers interested in applying to the expanded pilot can learn more and be directed to sign up for Uber or Lyft accounts at www.mbta.com/paratransitpilot. After the MBTA verifies customer eligibility, further instructions and access to the program will be sent via e-mail from Uber or Lyft within 1-2 weeks of sign-up. Once contacted by Uber or Lyft, customers can book trips via a smartphone mobile app. Lyft also has a phone call-in option and a limited number of Uber customers can utilize Uber-provided smartphones for use on a limited basis specifically to book trips.

The pilot is a part of a larger transformation of the RIDE to improve the customer experience and reduce the cost of service. Other initiatives include centralizing its call and dispatch functions and soon offering a revamped taxi subsidy pilot.

For more information regarding the pilot, please visit www.mbta.com/paratransitpilot.

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